

IS YOUR BELIEF BIBLICAL?

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Now, I love my country. And I know that all of you do. We love the freedoms which are guaranteed to us from the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. And I think that we all hold that the freedom of religion is maybe the one we hold most dearly. And I am thankful that all people here in America have the right to worship – or not to worship – according to their conscience. And I never want that right in any way taken away from them. Including you and me. And, I have no animus, I have no enmity, or antagonism, or hatred, or dislike for anybody that holds a different religious belief. And I say that because I think we all need to ponder that. I know back in the *Worldwide* days, when people got really hardcore, and it was almost, you know, they would drive by a church on the side of the road and go, “Well, look at that BAPTIST church!” “Look at that CATHOLIC church!” Especially this time of year, especially with all the Christmas decorations – it used to drive the people crazy back then. Well, I don’t celebrate Christmas, I don’t have a tree up in my yard, or in my house. And I don’t want to, never have and I’m not planning on it. But I don’t care if other people want to jack up their energy prices and pay more for electricity in the month of December. If they want to, go ahead, doesn’t bother me. However, back in the old days – how many of you remember that; where Christmas was almost a curse word!? There’s quite a few hands going up. And quite frankly it was a bit of an overreaction. We don’t keep Christmas. Period. I don’t have to get upset if somebody else does. I’m not going to, but if my neighbor has their lights on, I don’t care – I hope they’re pretty lights. And, I will say – I’ve said this before – I particularly love the blue lights. At night those blue lights are so enchanting, but, it’s not for me. However, it’s what they want to do, and as I say, I don’t have any hatred for them or anger in my heart.

I remember coming out of Ambassador College and would, sort-of, go down main street on a December and *have to* feel as if I was upset because of all the folderol that was going on. And quite frankly, you know, here the last ten

or twenty years of my life, I finally decided – I don't care. I just plain don't care. They want to do it, fine with me. Their Americans, if they want to climb up onto their roof and wave their feet back and forth – I don't care. If they can do it – alright. And, I do not dislike or hate Catholics. In fact I have some family members who are Catholic. I have several friends who are Catholic. And I do not hate or dislike Baptists – I have some friends and relatives who are Baptist. And I do not dislike or hate Methodists. And I do have some friends and relatives which are Methodist. And the same for all of the different religions we find around us in this society. However, I do not agree with their theology. And that's the difference, I think, we should make. I don't dislike a people who hold a particular faith, but I do have questions about the theology of their faith. And I guess that's sort-of normal. It shouldn't be surprising. If I thought the Catholics were right, wouldn't I be a Catholic!? Seems logical. If I thought the Baptists were right, wouldn't I be a Baptist!? And the fact that I'm not, somewhere implies that I don't totally agree with *what* they do, or *how* they do it. And, like I said, I have no animosity at all towards them. Now, I do have a problem with some of their leaders. And you think about some of the people who show up on television. You think about the guy who sits over in Rome and some of his predecessors. You think about some of the people who represent him and local perishes and the horrible things they have done under the cloak of religion. And, I have problems with some of the leaders! But not the average man and woman who is just a person who is belonging to them and doing what *they* think is right and have not thought it through.

And the reason I don't like their theology – plain and simple; very clear – IT DOES NOT COME FROM THE BIBLE! If they could show me how their beliefs came from the Bible I would be more respectful of their doing. But I've spent a lot of time studying it and I realize that – and I've realized *this* for a long, long time, and so has most of you – their belief system simply DOES NOT COME FROM THE BIBLE! It doesn't.

Now, **Matthew chapter 4, verse 4** and **Luke chapter 4, verse 4**, Jesus Christ laid down an extremely FOUNDATIONAL precept and tenant. That I think we always have to go back to it and remember. And He said this as He was being challenged, as it were, tempted of Satan. And in response to one of Satan's questions Jesus said, "...***Man shall not live by bread alone*** [and He was quoting from the Book of Deuteronomy; words which Moses was

inspired to write down], *but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*” – that’s such an IMPORTANT concept! That’s where our value system should be!

And turn with me to **2nd Timothy chapter 3** – remember the Book of Timothy, 1st and 2nd Timothy, Paul wrote to a young man that he had known, probably

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any children. Maybe he did, maybe he didn’t, but, there’s nothing in the Holy Bible about it. But, he did look kindly - fatherly – upon this young man Timothy. And he said in **chapter 3, verse 14** – “But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them.” – Paul is saying to Timothy, ‘You know what you know, and you know where you got it, and you know that I taught it to you.’ ‘Remember that I taught you these ideas.’ **Verse 15** - “and that from childhood [some translations say, ‘from a baby’] you have known the Holy Scriptures, ...” – these collections and writings of words, which Paul goes on to say, “...which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” **Verse 16** – “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable *for doctrine*, ...” – that’s where doctrine should come *from* - the Holy Bible! And a little later we’re going to talk about how a lot of doctrines that churches hold come from the traditions of human beings. They’re just traditions passed down from one generation to another, and they really have nothing to do with the Bible. But doctrine should come from the Bible! And he goes on to say, “for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”

And why!? **Verse 17** – “that the man of God [or the woman of God] may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” - *this* is how you’re supposed to learn what you’re supposed to do! This is where you learn *what* to believe! The Bible – the Word of God!

Now, the question that I asked the people down in Louisville, Kentucky – or rather a series of questions. And again, most of you here have answered these questions – I’m not so much talking to *you* and this audience *here*, but there may be some people that may have just discovered us, and maybe pass this onto a friend or a family member. These were the questions – and if I was having a conversation with somebody riding in a car, and I have had these types of conversation’s with some of my officiating buddies over the years -

1) What is the source of your religious beliefs?

Now, most people don’t stop and think about *that*. They just go, “Well, I’m a Catholic.” “I’m a Methodist.” “I’m a Baptist.” “We believe *this*, and we believe *that*.” But I don’t know if they’ve ever stopped and asked the questions: “Why do we believe *that*!?” “Where did it come from!?” “What’s the source!?”

2) Have you studied!?

Have you, on your own, taken the time to study *your* doctrines and then study the Bible!? And I would challenge everyone within the Church of God to do that! I know I hear church people often say, “Well, I know what I believe, but I really couldn’t explain it if somebody asked me.” And yet, Peter said, ‘Be ready to give an answer to any man that asks of you, the hope that lies within you!’ We are to be prepared. Now, we’re not to go knocking on doors and bothering people, but if we have that conversation with a person in the workplace, or the relative, or the neighbor, or the chance meeting on an airplane. So, you never know when that conversation is gonna come about. And *we* – we in the Church of God – need to be able to explain *what* we believe and *why* we believe it, and *where* to find it! Not to just say, “Come to church and talk to my minister.” That’s what Baptist’s do, have you ever noticed that!? You have a conversation with a Baptist and, you point out – “Well, the Sabbath isn’t Sunday.” And you get them muddled and confused and what do they say!? “Well, I’ll go and talk to my preacher about that!”

And about a week or two later they come back, “O’ my preacher told me that we’re right.” Alright, it just all goes away. Because the preacher-man, Pastor Brown, said it was alright. So, alright, that’s what we’re gonna do!

But have you searched, have you studied, have you pondered, have you contemplated, have you sincerely begged God to show you *His Truth*!? And have you used *the Bible* to prove or to disprove the validity of your particular religious beliefs. And, again, not so much for this audience, you know why you are here and, where you learned it and, what It is. But others have not done that study.

3) Are *you* like the vast majority of the people of the world on planet Earth, who take the teachings and beliefs of their mother or father, or their other family members – grandparents, uncles, aunts – and simply call them their own!?

You know, where do most Catholics come from!? They come from mothers or fathers who were Catholic. And, where do most Baptists come from!? Well, they come from Baptist families and, Methodists and, Episcopalian and, Lutherans and, Mormons – you know, name it! Where do Muslims learn their religion!? They learn it from their Muslim mother or father or family members. And they learn – if you dare name a teddy bear Muhammad kill that wretched infidel! Like Mark was referring to in the Update, just unreal. Where does Buddhists learn their religion!? Well, from other Buddhists and Hindus, and so on and so forth. So, that’s where people *normally* get their religion. Unless they really have something – a very unique experience in their life that causes them to do something differently.

Well, what does Paul say, very quickly - and I read these Scriptures up in Louisville, and I’m just gonna quickly read through them *here*. Because again, these are things which most of you have heard and I think it’s just a good review. And I appreciated the review, when I put the notes down, when I went over these a few days ago.

The apostle Paul in **1st Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 21** said, “Test [prove] all things; hold fast what is good.” – that’s what Paul told us to do! In **Acts chapter 17** he spoke of the Bereans, and he said, **Verse 11** – “These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.”

They listened to Paul, they took it in, and then they went back home and searched the Scriptures, making sure that Paul was not misleading them.

Jesus Christ, there in **John chapter 5, verse 39** said, “...‘search the Scriptures, for in them you think [or a better translation, ‘you know’] you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.’” – Jesus boldly challenged everyone to search the Scriptures!

In **2nd Timothy 2, verse 15**. Now, not far from where you were a few moments ago – “Be diligent [study the Scriptures] to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.” - So, there are so many Scriptures like this.

However, in this arena of society, there are literally hundreds and hundreds of different religions, and religious groups, and sects, and splits, and denominations. Even within the [Worldwide Church of God](#). What is it four-hundred and fifty-three splits that we now have from there!? You know, Paul asked the question one time – ‘is Christ divided!?’ The answer is supposed to be – no! But in reality, we know that in *this* present era the Church of God is divided in a lot of different directions. And, some have gone far, far, far, afield. *Some* have stayed pretty close to the Truth of God. And God will judge those accordingly.

Well, you have all these different religions, but, you gotta understand, they can't all be right! You know, a whole lot of them has to be wrong! The Muslim idea and the Buddhist idea are NOT compatible! Either one of them is right, or one of them is wrong, or they're both wrong! And so many, you can do that with any religion you can think of. Ask the question: Are some of them right or are some of them wrong!? Have some of them gone astray!? And we're told there's only ONE PLACE to find the Truth of God – and *that* is from the Bible, and *that* is to be our guide.

Jesus Christ said in **John chapter 4, verse 23** – “**“But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. 24) God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”**”

John chapter 6, verse 63 – “It is the Spirit [that quickens] who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The Words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.” And in **John chapter 8**, Jesus Christ made the comment, **Verse 47** – “He who is *of* God hears God’s Words; ...” – and that principle is approached many times in the New Testament! Those people who are *of* God hear what God is saying! Well, the opposite is true – if you’re not doing what God says there’s a real good chance that you are not *of* God!

Luke chapter 6, verse 46 – “But why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?” – and that could be asked of a lot of religious groups and religious leaders.

And a question I would like to ask all of you is: 4) Does your religion - and this is a question for you *here*, but it’s a question for your neighbor or your spouse, your relative who’s unconverted – reflect the Word of God as found in the Bible and the Words and the saying’s of Jesus Christ!? Or, does your religion have its roots and origins in the traditions of mankind!? And the Bible has an awful lot to say about *that*.

If you would, turn to **Matthew chapter 15**, and we hear from the Master Himself! **Verse 2** – “Why do Your disciples [they ask Him] transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.” And, Jesus said in **Verse 3** – “He answered and said to them, ‘Why do you also transgress [or disobey] the commandment of God because of your tradition?’” And He says in **Verse 6** – “... Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. 7) Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: **8) These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. 9) And in vain they worship Me Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.**” And then He says, a little later on, **Verse 14** – “Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. ...” – and so often we don’t correct people that we see - and I think that’s sort-of the attitude you have to have – well, they don’t understand, leave them alone.

Jesus Christ said the same type of material, but a little more expressive in **Mark chapter 7**, when He said – and this is comparable with what we read in Matthew chapter 15 – He quotes Isaiah in **Verses 6 & 7**, and then He says in **Verse 8** – “For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men – the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such

things you do.” - and these were obviously Jewish traditions that He was chiding them about. And isn’t it interesting – just as a side, I’m not here to preach on this very long, but, just as a side (it is my observation over the last 10, 15 years) within the Church of God or the remnants of the Church of God - how many individuals and how many little splinter groups want to go back to Jewish traditions – have you noticed!? And most of the “oddities” which have come along here the last few years are people striving to go back to something Jewish. Like some say, “Well, I am going to learn an ancient extinct language and use that as God’s name.” You know what I’m referring to, but I’ll be delicate about it. But quite frankly, no one knows how to pronounce those ancient Hebrew names from 5,000 years ago. Nobody knows how to say them! So to presume that *you* somehow know how to say them, and because *you* say it in this ancient “Jewish” language, somehow God’s gonna hear *you* and doesn’t hear anybody else!? That’s so very silly! And, the idea whether you can eat out on the Sabbath – “Well, the Jews don’t – so we shouldn’t!” That’s the Jews decision to make! Jesus Christ ate out – He walked through the corn fields, the wheat fields, ate, had His disciples eat. There’s so many things like *this* to talk about that people want to get into. Every year people want to get into weird ideas about the Passover. They want to stir things up, they want to get a little following unto them. And we’re not far away from the Passover season. I’m sure some of the ideas will start to leak out – I recently heard one that’s hard to understand. It said: Well you should keep the Passover with *leavened* bread. Now, isn’t that a shocker to you!? I must admit, in forty-one years of the association with the Church of God, I have never heard that one! So, that’s some type of award for creativity! But there are people who keep wanting to go *back*. I went to a meeting one time when Mr. Ted was speaking, somewhere in Kentucky or Tennessee, and a man showed up, and he slips off to the restroom and he comes back, and he’s got a yarmulke and a prayer shawl on! And so *this* is gonna be “holy,” some “Jewish” thing is going to be more holy than just someone like you or me sitting there in a normal set of clothes!? And, I hear that there’s some famous pastor – I don’t like to say his name; my throat bothers me every time I say it, something like kaaahhkkk – Hagee – that goes around wanting to say, “Well, here, send in so many dollars and I will send you a prayer shawl.” Or, “Send in so many dollars ...” – a “love gift” they like to call it. Don’t you love that!? ‘A love gift’! “...and I’ll send you a yarmulke!”

And somehow if you wear this prayer shawl and yarmulke, if you go back to ancient Jewish traditions, you're somehow closer to God!? Doesn't make sense. I never read where Jesus Christ wore a yarmulke or a prayer shawl. So, if it was good enough for Him *not* to wear it, it's good enough for me not to wear it! I recently said to somebody, in fact, it was Natalie Ricks, and Dr. Ricks at the Feast of Tabernacles, I said, "You know it won't be long till some little congregation out there starts having "Praise Worship." Because you turn on your television and you see all these things about praise worship – I call it the "palm-tree effect." You know, they're out there swaying in the wind like palm trees! And I said, "I'll bet ya somewhere out there some minister is gonna latch onto that and his congregation is gonna start 'praise worship.'" Natalie grabbed me and said, "O' up in Chicago they're already doing *that!*" It was some group that had left the *Worldwide* some time ago. And, they even gather around in a circle and do Jewish dances - and that's gonna be "church" for them! They're going to go back to Judaism! Jewish-isms. And we're told *here* – no! DON'T DO THAT! Stick with the Bible – do what the Bible tells you to do! And, He says here in **Verse 9** – "...'All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.'" And, in **Verse 13** – "'making the Word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.'"

So folks, the goal is to not become Jewish. I got to tell a story: Once upon a time, I baptized a man and his wife – two couples – and afterwards I noticed the two men were changing, and the two fellas put on a [Star of David](#). And, one of them looked like he was straight from England, he was not "Jewish." And it caught my attention, and I just couldn't resist myself, I went over to them and said, "I can't help but notice that you put on the Star of David. Why are you wearing that!?" And the man looked at me and said, "Well don't we want to become Jewish!?" I said, "O' no. Not me. I wish to become *Christian*." But I was just amazed - there's just some little part of the brain that wants to go back and to grab onto those ancient Jewish traditions and bring them into the 21st century. And somehow think that God will be pleased. When the Words of God obviously say no.

Colossians chapter 2, verses 4 & 8 – Paul said the following, "Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words [or should I say also enticing offers!? If you send in your "love offering"] ... Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the

tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.” – well, enough said for that. But, folks, don’t bring your religious traditions *from* mankind!

Now, I dare say, can anyone tell me – raise your hands – where in the Bible is *the* Saint Nicolas and all of that mentioned!? The flying reindeer and Rudolph and Santa Claus!? It’s not there – is it!? And yet, most of our world and in America – the Western world – they keep that tradition. And we’re already seeing things like that as you drive around. And you say, “Well, where do you find *that* in the Bible!? Obviously you don’t! It’s a tradition *of* human beings! Just another example of how that’s not what we’re supposed to do!



Be sure to watch “[Proving the Truth!](#)” by Minister Michael C. Garrett, of the [Owensboro Church of Jesus Christ](#)

Well in passage after passage the Bible WARNS us about being misled and deceived! **2nd Corinthians chapter 4** Paul said that – referring to Satan as that ‘god of this world’ “has blinded, who do not believe, ...” And then John, in the Book of **Revelation** says – speaking of that great dragon in **chapter 12, verse 9** – “that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; ...”

And Paul in **2nd Corinthians chapter 11** said, **Verse 13** – “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. **14**) And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. **15**) Therefore [and **HEAR THIS! This is Paul – the Word of God!**] it is no great thing if [Satan’s] ministers also transform [or appear] themselves into ministers of righteousness, ...” – Paul said, ‘there’s nothing shocking about that!’ And in **Matthew chapter 24** – I won’t take the time here to read it – but, Jesus Christ WARNED the people – ‘don’t be deceived, don’t be deceived!’ He talked about false apostles. This is an end-time prophecy.

Well, how does a person discern between a false apostle or a false prophet, or a false minister and a true minister of Jesus Christ!? And, this would be – if you’re comparing the Church of God, or a Protestant church. And the same requirements would apply if you are being taken away from the traditions, let’s say the Owensboro Church of Jesus Christ, and somebody is trying to get you to do something else. Which is different, and sort-of, odd! You can ask this question. Jesus Christ said in **Matthew chapter 7**, speaking of true apostles and false apostles – “**You will know them by their fruits.**” And then, in the Book of Isaiah, **Isaiah chapter 8, verse 20** – “To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this Word, ...” – IF THEY SPEAK NOT ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE – “it is because there is no light in them.” And so when someone comes up to you and offers you an odd idea, and if your stomach tells you, “You know that’s a little different, I don’t remember ... reading that in my Bible.” Your alarm bells should just start screaming to high heaven! **WARNING WARNING WARNING WARNING!** This person is trying to mislead me! To take me astray! Don’t let them do it!

Well, another issue which often we have to deal with as members of the Church of God – I know it was thrown in my face – and I’m going to ask you in just a minute to raise your hands, and I’ll bet ya, many, if not all have had this thrown into your face. And, it starts out like this: A relative, a close friend might say, “Well, compared to the millions and millions of people who belong to the great church organizations, and traditions of the Western world, *you guys* [referring to us, the Owensboro Church of Jesus Christ] are so very small, and insignificant.” And that’s partly true. And then they ask this question, “How can you be right, and everybody else is wrong!?”

How many of you have had that one thrown in your face!? Raise your hands. “Well, Michael, how can *you* be right!? How can that little group be right!? And all of these other churches be wrong!?” How can *that* be!? And, it’s a difficult question to understand, but actually it’s a pretty easy question to answer. And it really comes down to this: The Bible NEVER NEVER NEVER said that the people of God would be numerous, or in the majority! They never have been in this era of time! That will not change until the BLOWING OF THE SEVENTH TRUMP – the RESURRECTION OF THE SAINTS – and the RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST! And then, will we, finally be in the majority! But until then, we are always going to be in the minority. And the Bible intimates that over and over again. And, it’s interesting, the only church organization *which is universal in nature*, which is referenced in the Bible, has this said about her, as an organization: “Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, 2) with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication.” – that’s **Revelation 17**. That one great organization and the protesting daughters which came from her – they’re referenced in the Bible – but, folks, I can’t come up with a better phrase – “the great whore.” And, that’s what Jesus Christ said about *this* organization!

And, Jesus, in **Matthew chapter 20, verse 16** – “...’For many are called [invited], but few chosen.’” – *few* are actually selected to be members of the Church.

Isaiah chapter 1, verse 9 – and I think Isaiah’s talking about the Church of God. He says, “Unless the LORD of hosts Had left to us a very small remnant, ...” – it was never said that we were going to be great in number.

Although, back in the days of *Worldwide*, we always had hopes – I can remember Mr. Herbert Armstrong - every Spring we’d have their budget - and he would say, “We’re going to grow at 33%!” And, all the years that I was out there, he made *that* announcement, and later we found out it was about 15%. And so every Spring there were cuts. And everybody started worrying about losing their job, because they had budgeted too much. But the idea was, at one time, that the *Worldwide Church of God* was just going to grow, and grow, and grow! Hence the name *Worldwide*.

But, even though we as humans had these aspirations, God knew a different plan. He knew, “No, you’re never going to be the majority.”

Matthew chapter 13 – in Matthew 13, we have the Parable of the Sower. And notice how in **Verse 2** – “And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.” And, He began to speak in parables, or puzzles, or conundrums. And then down in **Verse 10** – “And the disciples came and said to Him [Jesus Christ], ‘Why do You speak to them in parables?’” And He says in **Verse 11** – “He answered and said to them, ‘Because it has been given to you [a very small remnant; this select group] to know the mysteries [the hidden truth’s] of the Kingdom [of the] heaven[s], but to them [the great majority; to the great masses] it has not been given.’” – and those were His Words. He says in **Verse 13** – “Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.” And, then He quotes from Isaiah, talking about a time when their heart WOULD be converted! And we know that’s in the Kingdom of God. Either as we stretch into that other era of time or in the “Great White Throne Judgment.” But He says in **Verse 16** – and maybe this is something we need to add to our Thank You list. Now, I’ve said this before, from this very lectern, that we should be thankful to God. And I have a number of things that I try and continually thank God for – good weather coming down here, the safe trip. Even though you didn’t know it, but wallago I was saying, “Thank you dear Father for getting us here once again!” And the van – that hela mobile – made it again! And I’m thankful to God, every time, “Thank You!” But this is really big time *here!* Notice what Jesus says, “But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; 17) for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men ...” – speaking of the prophets of old; big time heavyweights, contender’s in the Kingdom of God! He says, they, “...’desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.’” – and it’s so shocking, I think a case could be made, that *we* – piddly old you and me – actually understand the Plan of God better than Isaiah, better than Ezekiel, better than Jeremiah, better than Daniel. You know, Daniel wrote a bunch of stuff down and said, “What does it mean!”? And, Jesus said, in effect, “Hey, don’t worry about it. It will be revealed in the end-time.”

Thank about *that*! We understand more about the Plan of God and the Truth of God and the Ways of God, than some of the greatest names in the history of the Bible! It has been given unto us! And I think that level of understanding has continued to grow. And I think that's wonderful! I think we should truly be thankful for it!

You know, some people back in the *Worldwide Church of God* use to say, "Well, in the end-time, we'll have an explosion of church members right near the end-time!" "They'll see all these bad things coming, and they'll repent." Often I've heard them refer to it as "last minute repents." And, again, if you want to believe that you're free to do so, I personally do not read it that way. I see some other things mentioned. If you would, turn to Revelation chapter 1. Meaning, that I believe, even until the end we will be a small church, compared to the rest of the world. He says in **Revelation chapter 1, verse 7**



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7 – "Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, ..." – obviously talking about the Return of Jesus Christ! "even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. ..." – you don't see a big celebration – hosanna and the palm fronds being laid down, "Come dear Jesus, come dear Messiah!" – no, the world is in absolute turmoil when they see these events happening! Notice **Revelation chapter 6, verse 15** –

"And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every [bond man] and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, **16**) and said to the mountains and rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!' - I don't see people going, "O' yes, I repent!" No, I see people cowering like bugs crawling into the rocks – like snakes. Absolutely terrified of this returning power! Even though people like you and me will be jumping up and down celebrating, "He's HERE!" "He's HERE! LOOK, LOOK!"

Well, notice **Revelation chapter 9, verse 6** – another statement that's made by John. "In those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them." – They're so scared, so worried, so traumatized, they want to die, and yet they aren't allowed to – this does not sound like people who are readily repenting at the last moment! Also **Revelation chapter 9, verse 20** – "But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, DID NOT REPENT of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. **21**) And they DID NOT REPENT of their murders or their sorceries, or their [fornications] or their thefts." – here we're told again the vast majority of the people just simply refuse to repent! I don't see in the end-time a great massive move of repentance. But that's just something that I think about. If you believe differently, that's fine, no earth-shaking deal on *that*.

Well, we, who are members of the Church of God, we hold doctrines which radically differs from the beliefs and teachings of the so-called nominal Christianity. We hold the Sabbath. And yet, the vast majority of the Western world teaches Sunday worship. And yet the Sabbath, or the seventh-day, is mentioned in the Bible – I think a hundred and seventy-seven times! And not once do you hear about the concept of Sunday. A few times you hear the phrase, "first day of the week," but every time you hear it was a work day, it wasn't a holy day. And I said out there, and I'll just say here, that the Protestant attempts to prove that Sunday is the Sabbath, or the holy day, they're absolutely pathetic. And sometime I'd like to come down here and give a sermon – and use their own quotations – and show you how their attempts to prove it are simply pitiful. You know Catholics understand that Saturday is the Sabbath!? They don't argue with it, they don't even fight about it. They say, "Yeah, we know that Saturday is the Sabbath." But then they say, "We changed it!" And they're proud of it! And they're right. They did, the early church father's – Constantine the Great – and all the people passed on that tradition. Because they didn't want to be Jewish, so they were gonna be different. But, we hold that, and that's a different belief than most of the people believe. We had the issue of Christmas. We talked about it. And when I talk about Christmas I just say, "Hey, it's the Mass-of-Christ. And if you're Catholic, I presume you're going to keep Christ-mass. But if you're not a Catholic, why are you keeping a Catholic-mass!?"

Why are you doing that!? And, that made my mother upset. Every so often she would ask, “Well, Mike, why don’t you keep Christmas!?” And I would talk about – well, Jesus Christ *wasn’t* born on or near December 25th. Late December is actually the “rebirth of the Sun.” And I said, we can prove that He was out in the Fall of the year. And I said, “By the way, it’s the Mass-of-Christ. It’s Catholic.” And Mom isn’t even Catholic, she grew up Baptist in Texas. And some of you who grew up Baptist in Texas know that way back then, there wasn’t a whole lot of love lost between the Baptists and the Catholics. But Mom got angry with me when I said, “The Mass-of-Christ.” And then she put her hand up, and said, “Stop it! I can’t take it anymore!” So, alright. I said, “That’s it!?” She said, “That’s it!” Alright. And so we’d go onto something else.

Well, Easter. I’ve often called it “Ishtar.” Because, it is. It’s a celebration of a pagan sex goddess! Hence, we have bunny rabbits, and Easter eggs, and all of that paraphernalia! Has nothing to do with Jesus Christ – although they try and make it sound like its got something to do with Jesus Christ.

The issue of Halloween. Again, come straight from Catholic tradition. Again, I don’t hate the Catholics – I don’t! But I think their theology stinks. I really do.

We have the Biblically stated Holy Days, as mentioned in Leviticus 23, and throughout the Bible – the Old Testament, and the New Testament.

We have the concept of the *nature* of God – that question: Is God a Trinity or is God a Family!? And if you hold that He *is* a Trinity – the Godhead is closed. Which means – NO VACANCY, DON’T STOP HERE! Because there’s no place to get in – if you believe that concept, if it were true. And yet, what we know to be true is that God Almighty has opened up His Family to us. He is offering to you and me (isn’t that remarkable!?) the opportunity to literally become members of the Family of God! Sons and daughters in the Family of God! I never get over that one! That one boggles my mind! I know it’s true, but I’m not gonna fully understand it until it happens! And then I’m gonna look at my body and go, “Amazing!” I never could understand how He could come up with such a Plan. A Plan so great, not even Hollywood could come up with such an idea! Well, it’s a wonderful Plan!

Also, there's the idea of the immortal soul, which the Protestants and the Catholic keep. And I guess the Muslims and the Buddhists have it – all of them!? The immortal soul – that when you die, you don't die, you just keep living. Even though the Bible says, "The soul that sins, it shall die." "The wages of sin is death." Over and over It talks about death – the second death. The Bible clearly states that, you can find yourself dead – but dead eternally. But they say, "No. You're going to live forever! You're either gonna be in Heaven or you're gonna be in Hell." And normally, you know, with *hell*, it's those old hard-liners, it's that burning place and people are writhing. And with some of the New Age people, hell is simply a "separation from God." So it's not so bad, you don't get to live on the golf course, you're back there, you know, near the woods. But your separated – you're still alive. It's not so bad, I guess. You'll be with a lot of your buddies, probably be with a lot of politicians, movie stars, and presidents.

I mean, that's what they teach – it's so silly! It's ridiculous! The Bible says, "No, you are NOT an immortal soul!" But what the Bible does teach, which is so wonderful, that we have a chance to become God. And this I say is the greatest doctrine which we hold – that all of our friends and relatives, who were not converted, will, one day, live again, and have a chance to learn the Truth of God. And we will be their teachers, working for God. And they will have a chance for eternal life! And so when I put my Mother in the ground, I really didn't put her in the ground – I simply put her in waiting. God will bring her back to life and my Father, and my family members, and all of them will have a chance to learn the Truth of God! They're not suffering in hell. And, they're not floating around on a cloud playing a harp – going insane. Because, as I've said, if you play a harp for ten-thousand years you gotta go insane! Nothing against harp music! No, we have something so much more wonderful! We have the promise of God that Jesus Christ is going to return and that we – and this is the first thing that I ever heard Mr. Ted say when I was sixteen years old; he ended his program by saying, he talked about the coming Kingdom of God, and then at the end he said, "And you have a chance to be a part of this!" And so in the very first broadcast I heard clearly and distinctly the gospel of the Kingdom of God! And the greatest part about it was, I had a chance to be a part of it! And so do you – all of us do! And we understand that!

But these Scriptures we'll talk about. I just here the last few minutes, I'm gonna read from the Book of Revelation, a few passages. I could talk about it, but folks I don't think I can top this – these words are so eloquent and so beautiful. **Revelation chapter 5, verse 10** – “And [He will make] us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.” – an eternal member of the Family of God, with authority, with things to do! **Revelation chapter 7** – talking about another group of people who will be in the Kingdom of God. **Verse 14** – “...So he said to me, ‘These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. **15**) Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. **16**) They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the Sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; **17**) for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

And then in **Revelation chapter 20** – we read these beautiful verses, **Verses 4 & 6** – “And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them [that ‘*them*’ is some of you guys!]. Then I saw the [lives] of those who had been beheaded for the witness to Jesus and for the Word of God, who had not worshiped *the beast or his image* [that great whore which He talked about earlier], and *had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands* [the sign of the cross, that's what I think that means]. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.” – and we know that it goes on beyond that – that's just the next block of time! **Verse 6** – “Blessed and holy is he [or she] who has part in the first resurrection [the foremost, the greatest resurrection]. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” Then, in **Revelation 21** – I've often said every chance I get to read this at a church service I do, because I love these verses – **Verse 2** – “Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. **3**) And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. **4**) And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.

5) Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I will make all things new.’ And He said to me, ‘Write for these Words are true and faithful.’ 6) And He said to me, ‘It is done! I AM the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him [or her] who thirsts. 7) He [or she] who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be [their] God and [they] shall by My [children].’” – a promise from God! Then **Verse 22** – “But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23) The city had no need of the Sun or of the Moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. 24) And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. 25) Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). 26) And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. 27) But there shall be no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.” And then, **chapter 22, verse 1** – “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2) In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3) And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.” – hopefully people like you and me. **Verse 4** – “They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. 5) There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the Sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.” – remember I said that thousand years was just one part of the plan, but it goes on forever! **Verse 6** – “Then he said to me, ‘These Words are faithful and true.’ And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place.” – and I believe we’re entering that time period, with *that* meaning what it says! **Verse 7** – “**Behold, I AM coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this Book.**” 8) Now I, John, saw and heard these things. And when I heard and saw, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel who showed me these things. 9) Then he said to me, ‘See that you do not do that. For I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets, and of those who keep the words of this Book. Worship God.’”

And **Verse 10** – “And he said to me, ‘Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this Book, for the time is at hand.’” – and I believe these words are on the edge of being at hand! **Verse 11** – “He who is unjust, let him be unjust still; he who is filthy, let him be filthy still [no last minute repenters!]; he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still.’ **12**) ‘**And behold, I AM coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his [or her] work.** **13**) **I AM the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”** –

Verses 14-19, 20 – “He who testifies to these things says, ‘**Surely I AM coming quickly.**’” And then, John said, “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” And then he said, and I say to all of you, **Verse 21** – “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” – so be it.

Owensboro Church of Jesus Christ

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